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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

MONDAY, July 24, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Preserves and Jams from Summer Fruits." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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I don't know what your opinion is, but many other good housekeepers tell me that they believe in putting up fruit at home only when it pays. Those who live in cities and have to buy all their fruit often find that making their own jellies, preserves and so on doesn't save them a cent--in fact, that it's frequently expensive. So often they have to spend more for supplies than the best grade of finished product will cost to buy. When fresh fruit is selling at a good price, probably we'll all be wise to buy only enough to eat fresh, not to preserve.

But many other times preserving and jelly-making at home pays well. For example, it pays when you have your own fruits right on the place, or when you can get wild fruits free for the picking, or when the relatives present you with some big basketfuls of fruit from their farm.

Let's see. Last week we talked about jelly-making, didn't we? Well, jelly is one good, old-time way of saving fruit for winter. But for variety's sake you'll want other fruit sweets on your shelves--preserves and conserves, jams and marmalades, fruit butters and also some bottles of fruit juice. We won't have time to discuss all these methods of saving fruit today, so let's concentrate on one or two of them--preserves and jams, say. Perhaps you're asking, "What's the difference between preserves and jams?" The experts say that preserves are whole small fruits or pieces of larger fruits cooked in a heavy sugar solution until they are clear and transparent, tender yet firm enough to keep their shape. They say that jams are small fruits like berries or small pieces of fruit also cooked down with sugar. To put it another way, preserves contain large, firm pieces of fruit distinct in the sirup, while jams are just a soft mass of fruit blended with the sirup.

The experts tell me that the heavy sugar solution or thick sirup is responsible for the special texture and transparency of preserves. When you put the fruit in the sirup, it gives off its own juice and absorbs sugar. At the same time the sirup cooks down to a thickness that will preserve the fruit. Now suppose you want to make the pieces of fruit extra plump. Then let the mixture stand overnight in the kettle after you have cooked it. This allows the fruit to absorb more of the sirup than it does during cooking. In the morning, drain the fruit and reheat the juice. Put the fruit in sterilized jars and pour the hot juice over it. Seal the jars, That's that. Preserves made of firm fruits, like quince and pears, you cook in sugar sirup. Very soft juicy fruit like berries you generally put on with just sugar. The sirup forms from this sugar and the juice of the fruit. Cooking in sirup tends to make the cell walls of the fruit tough. So cooking in thick sirup makes the soft fruits firmer, but the firm fruits tough. With these solid fruits, you'll sometimes get best results by cooking them until tender in water and then putting them in sirup.

What kind of fruits to choose for preserves? Almost any kind that you happen to have. Probably you'll have best results if you use fruits that tend to hold their shape. But you can make delicious preserves out of such soft fruits as berries, cherries, figs, peaches and apricots, as well as the firmer fruits like pears, apples, quinces, pineapple, plums and watermelon rind. You can even make good preserves of tomatoes. With the very soft fruits, you'll probably have best results if you select those that aren't quite ripe.

Well, now what about getting the different fruits ready for preserving? Berries? Pick them over carefully, then wash and drain. Cherries? Wash, stem and pit them. Plums? Just wash them and prick the skin so they will absorb sirup. You can remove the skin of soft fruits like peaches, figs and apricots by dipping them in hot water. Most people pare and core quinces, pears and apples, then cut them in halves and quarters. Watermelon rind needs paring and dicing into good-sized pieces.

So much for getting the fruit ready. Now about actually making it into preserves. As we mentioned, soft juicy fruits need different treatment from firm fruits. Use sugar alone with the juicy fruits but thin sugar sirup with the firmer fruits. The first thing to do is to weigh your ingredients. Use three-fourths to equal parts of sugar and fruit. If you are preserving berries, cherries or soft peaches cover the fruit with the proper amount of sugar and let them stand all night. The sugar will draw the juice from the fruit. Now put them in a wide shallow kettle to allow for rapid evaporation, heat slowly to boiling and boil rapidly until the sirup is somewhat thick and the fruit is clear. Let the mixture stand to cool. This will "plump up" the fruit. Now reheat the mixture and pour it in hot sterilized jars. That's all. Rapid cooking helps keep flavor and color, but be careful not to scorch the preserves on the bottom of the kettle. And be careful not to overcook the mixture. Overcooking turns preserves dark and sticky and spoils their flavor and texture.

Now if you are making preserves from some of the firm, less juicy fruits, such as some varieties of plums and peaches, make a sirup by boiling three-quarters to one pound of sugar and one-half cup water for each pound of fruit. Add your fruit and cook rapidly until the mixture gives the jelly test, or until it is slightly thicker than for jelly. Let the preserves stand overnight to plump. If you like a slightly jellied juice and the fruit doesn't contain pectin you can add a little commercial pectin.

Now for jams, use well-ripened fruits. They'll give more flavor. You aren't interested in having fruit in jam keep its shape. Prepare and weigh the fruit as for preserves. Use three-fourths to equal parts of sugar and fruit. You can use one kind of fruit alone or you can use several together. Put the fruit in the kettle using no or a little water and cook a few minutes. Crush the fruit with a wooden potato masher. Blueberries or any hard berries you can put through a food grinder beforehand. Now add sugar to the boiling mixture and cook until thick enough for the jelly test. Pour hot into hot, sterilized jars and seal.

For both preserves and jams, remember that the important points are preparing the fruit carefully in advance, cooking rapidly until just done, never overcooking.

Tomorrow: "Caring for Colored Clothes."

